



TOWN OF GARNER

NEWS RELEASE

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Town Releases Recommended FY 14-15 Budget

The Town Manager's Office has released its recommended operating budget for fiscal year 2014-15, and copies were distributed to the Town Council at its work session on April 29. Public hearings on the budget are scheduled for the Town Council regular meetings on Monday, May 5 and Monday, June 2 at 7 p.m. The Council will also hold a budget work session on Wednesday, May 7 starting at 8:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers.

The recommended \$26.626 million budget – an increase of approximately \$865,000, or 3.4 percent, over the FY 2013-14 adopted budget – includes a proposed one-cent increase on the municipal property tax rate for public safety and emergency services. In FY 2014-15, approximately 50 percent of the proposed measure will support the hiring of three new firefighters and ensure that Garner residents continue to receive outstanding fire protection services from Garner Volunteer Fire & Rescue, Inc. (GVFR).

An additional 25 percent will be reserved for future emergency services needs such as the anticipated increase for funding a full year of additional firefighters and known future vehicle replacements. The remaining 25 percent will be used in FY 2014-15 for purchase of a much-needed backlog of equipment for the Garner Police Department. The Town anticipates that the entire one-cent increase would be used in FY 2015-16 to support GVFR.

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This is the first proposed tax rate increase in seven years. For the average single-family home valuation in Garner – currently \$177,516 – the rate increase would mean an additional cost of \$17.75 annually.

“After several years of a sluggish economy, we are thrilled to be in a position poised for additional growth and development in the Town, and we are excited to recommend a budget that begins to address needs that were postponed,” Town Manager Hardin Watkins said. “We developed a set of budget priorities, and the Town Council has developed a 2014 Strategic Action Plan. This budget will help the Town achieve the results we desire.”

Although property tax revenues are projected to increase 1.3 percent and sales tax revenues are projected to increase 6.65 percent next year, offsetting decreases are projected for beer and wine taxes, utility franchise taxes and grant revenues. Also, in FY 2013-14, the Town received an additional \$350,000 from Wake County for property tax collections (vehicles) that will not recur in future years.

It should also be noted that even though an array of residential and commercial construction projects are under way or have been approved, that new development is not yet taxable.

Numerous items in the proposed budget would improve the quality of services that the Town provides to Garner residents. Some of those items include:

- Approximately \$137,000 for three new GVFR firefighters (to start January 2015) and some operational needs for GVFR;
- \$103,000 for a more proactive approach to fixing potholes and deteriorating Town-maintained streets;
- \$230,000 to replace the Town’s aging street sweeper;
- \$40,000 to support conversion of all Town-owned streetlights to LEDs (annual savings in utility costs estimated at \$67,145);
- \$25,000 to design a new Town website that will provide better access to information and services and will better promote Garner.

Copies of the recommended budget are available for review at Town Hall (900 Seventh Ave.) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and at the Wake County Southeast Regional Library (908 Seventh Ave.). The library is open Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The proposed budget can also be found online at <http://www.garnernc.gov/Departments/Finance/Default.aspx>.

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